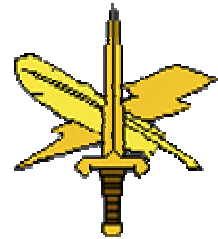




NEWS RELEASE

**Public Affairs Office
Fort Riley, KS 66442
Telephone (785) 239-3033/3410 FAX (785) 239-2592
After Hours (785) 239-2222
E-mail: stephanie.perrin@riley.army.mil or
skidmord@riley.army.mil
www.riley.army.mil**



FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT
Stephanie Perrin, Assistant Media Relations Officer (785) 239-3033

Rel. No. 8-3-2006
August 3, 2006

FORT RILEY TO OPEN CONTROL TOWER

By Deb Skidmore
Media Relations Officer

Fort Riley is changing and growing. And, if you listen carefully, you will hear the sound of rotary blades of Black Hawks or Apache helicopters lifting off from Marshall Army Airfield. This is quite a change for Fort Riley according to Ralph Millard, air traffic control chief at Marshall Army Airfield.

To help relay some of the airfield changes, Millard and Troy Mattingly, the airfield manager, met with local pilots and community members at the Junction City Airport July 19.

Mattingly told a group of local pilots that the post is undergoing major construction projects due to the arrival of the 1st Infantry Division headquarters from Germany. With this Army restructuring, he said that Fort Riley is gaining a Combat Aviation Brigade that will be made up of approximately 2,800 servicemembers.

"The significant impact for the Junction City area will concern Class D air space," said Millard. "Folks are not used to it, but it is a workable situation," he said. "We see ourselves as your new neighbor," Millard told the pilots.

Millard explained that approximately 75 helicopters were assigned to Fort Riley before the 1st Infantry Division headquarters was moved to Germany in 1996. After that, he said the post only hosted the 82nd Medical Company that is currently deployed to Iraq on its third rotation. He added that the airfield supported both rotary and fixed wing aircraft at the time.

"Now in 2006, we can expect approximately 120 helicopters to be assigned at the post airfield," Millard said, "and our airfield control tower is set to open Aug. 14.

"A major change, however, is that the airfield will not support fixed wing aircraft now," he said. "It will only support our Army helicopters."

Millard told the group they can expect to see Black Hawks, Apaches, Chinooks and Kiowas coming and going from the airfield on training missions.

“As with anything, there are always some disadvantages,” Millard said, “but the disadvantages are few.”

He explained that anyone traveling from the Junction City Airport going East, would have to contact the Marshall Army Airfield control tower before they go through the Class D air space. Additionally, he said there would be an increase in rotary-wing traffic in the local area and an increase in closed traffic at the Junction City Airport.

Millard told the group that the advantages of the Marshall Army Airfield control tower opening would far outweigh the disadvantages. He said the advantages include the following:

- * If a local pilot can not reach Kansas City Center, the Marshall Army Airfield control tower can assist by relaying clearances and cancellations since the tower will have a direct line to Kansas City Center.
- * If a pilot were to have a malfunction while flying or get caught in bad weather, the post's new radar facility has the equipment, to allow controllers to talk the pilot through a landing over their radio.
- * The post has hired seasoned air controllers with an average of 10 years of experience.
- * The post has put personnel on board with 12 to 15 years of supervisory experience.
- * The 2,800 new personnel coming to make up the CAB will have an economic impact on the local economy.

“A lot of love for aviation is coming into the area,” Millard said, “but please understand that our aviators are preparing for war. There will be a lot of night flying for training.” Mattingly, told the group that the end state of the control tower will be a 24-7 operation. However, until more people are hired, the plan for the tower is to be open 16 hours a day.

“Right now, it will not be open on weekends and federal holidays,” he said. Mattingly said that three new hangars are being built on Marshall Army Airfield along with a new and improved runway.

“There is \$500 million worth of construction going on out there,” he said. Before the tower opens however, Mattingly said that the Department of the Army is coming to look over the equipment. “It must be approved by the DA and the FAA (Federal Aviation Agency),” he said.

An official ribbon cutting ceremony is scheduled at the control tower Aug. 18 at 9 a.m. Col. Thomas Smith, garrison commander, will do the honors. The public is invited to attend.